

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 PC-01 AID-05
OMB-01 TRSE-00 COME-00 HA-05 PPT-01 CA-01 SCS-06
SY-05 EB-08 AGRE-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /146 W
-----130629 251723Z /46

R 240617Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1868
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MPAUTO
USMUSSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0843

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV RH BC
SUBJ: TEMPORARY REOPENING OF KAZUNGULA BORDER POST

REF: (A) GABORONE 0651, (B) GABORONE 0566

1. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT MARCH 22 ANNOUNCED GOB DECISION
TO REOPEN KAZUNGULA BORDER POST FOUR HOURS PER DAY FOR TEN
DAYS EFFECTIVE FROM MARCH 21. ACCORDING TO ANNOUNCEMENT,
GOB DECISION WAS MADE "FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS" AT THE
REQUEST OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. THE REOPENING WILL
"ONLY APPLY TO A BACKLOG OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRUCKS WHICH ARE
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CARRYING FOOD AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR THE CAPRIVI STRIP".

2. AS PREDICTED REF A, CLOSING OF KAZUNGULA BORDER POST HAS
DISRUPTED COMPLEX TRANSPORTATION AND SUPPLY PATTERNS IN FOUR
CORNERS AREA. AMCIT MISSIONARIES WORKING WITH BOTSWANA
AGRICULTURAL BRIGADES IN KASANE HAVE REPORTED SEVERE SHORTAGE
OF FOOD, FERTILIZER AND OTHER PRODUCTS WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD

BEEN OBTAINED IN RHODESIA. GOB'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF BORDER REOPENING IS CONFIRMATION OF SUPPLY SHORTAGES IN CAPRIVI STRIP RESULTING FROM CLOSING OF KAZUNGULA POST.

3. EMBOFF DISCUSSED REOPENING OF BORDER POST WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY CHARLES TIBONE MARCH 23. ACCORDING TO TIBONE, REOPENING IS ONLY TEMPORARY AND KAZUNGULA BORDER POST WILL DEFINITELY BE SHUT DOWN AFTER THE TEN-DAY RESPITE. TIBONE SAID THAT GOB AGREED TO TEMPORARY REOPENING BECAUSE OF SAG ASSURANCES THAT STRANDED TRUCKS WERE CARRYING MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR HOSPITAL AS WELL AS GOODS FOR BADLY DEPLETED SHELVES OF SHOPS IN CAPRIVI STRIP. GOB REGARDED THESE AS COMPELLING HUMANITARIAN REASONS FOR ALLOWING TRUCKS TO PASS, ALTHOUGH TIBONE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME SUPPLIES WOULD ALSO PROBABLY REACH SADF TROOPS IN EASTERN CAPRIVI.

4. WITH REGARD TO LONG-TERM SUPPLY AND TRANSPORTATION PATTERNS IN FOUR CORNERS AREA, TIBONE INSISTED THAT ARRANGEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE BY ALL PARTIES TO DO WITHOUT KAZUNGULA BORDER POST. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BATSWANA IN KAZUNGULA AREA ARE UNDERGOING HARDSHIPS BECAUSE EASY ACCESS TO RHODESIA HAS BEEN CUT OFF FORCING THEM TO RELY ON EXPENSIVE AND UNRELIABLE RESUPPLY BY TRUCK FROM RAILHEAD AT FRANCISTOWN. TIBONE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT BOTSWANA WOULD LIVE WITH THESE DISRUPTIONS AND THAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SIMILAR ADJUSTMENTS TO RESUPPLY CAPRIVI STRIP.

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5. COMMENT: GOB INSISTENCE ON PERMANENT CLOSURE OF KAZUNGULA BORDER POINT IS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY TOUGH POLICY ON ISSUE OF SOME IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICA. TEMPORARY PASSAGE OF TRUCKS STRANDED AT KAZUNGULA WILL AT BEST BUY TIME FOR SAG TO MORE CAREFULLY CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR CAPRIVI SUPPLY TO INCLUDE THAT OF PRESSURING GOB THROUGH ECONOMIC COERCION TO PERMANENTLY REOPEN KAZUNGULA POINT. GIVEN BOTSWANA'S VIRTUALLY TOTAL ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA, GOB WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO RESIST IF SAG CHOSE TO RESORT TO ECONOMIC COERCION. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENT WHICH EMBASSIES CAPE TOWN AND PRETORIA MAY HAVE CONCERNING WHETHER SAG SEES BOTSWANA'S CLOSURE OF KAZUNGULA BORDER POINT AS THREAT TO MAINTENANCE OF SADF PRESENCE OR OTHER SOUTH AFRICAN OBJECTIVES IN CAPRIVI STRIP.

6. AT THE SAME TIME, RHODESIA'S RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA MUST HAVE BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY RECKLESS AND UNNECESSARY ATTACK BY RSF ON BDF PATROL WHICH HAS DISRUPTED HERETOFORE CONVENIENT SUPPLY ROUTE FROM RHODESIA TO CAPRIVI STRIP. RHODESIANS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN WARNED BY SAG TO AVOID NEW INCIDENTS WHICH MIGHT UNDERMINE SOUTH AFRICAN EFFORTS TO

CONVINCE GOB TO REOPEN KAZUNGULA BORDER POST. THEREFORE,
GOB MAY HAVE FOUND AN EFFECTIVE BACKDOOR THROUGH PRETORIA TO
DETER MORE RHODESIAN ATTACKS ON BOTSWANA'S BORDERS.
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